

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 13, 28 and 29 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:
  - a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite first laterally spaced first side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;
  - a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally spaced from each other so as to form a gap therebetween with said first and second crotch edges being free of any direct connection therebetween, wherein said first crotch edge of said front body panel does not overlie said rear body panel and said rear crotch edge of said rear body panel does not overlie said front body panel, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and
  - a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit.

2. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:
  - a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;
  - a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally

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spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and  
a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said front and rear body panels each comprise a body side surface and a garment side surface, and wherein said crotch member is connected to said garment side surface of each of said front and rear body panels.~~

3. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:  
a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;  
a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and  
a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said crotch member comprises a top sheet, a back sheet and a retention portion disposed between said top sheet and said back sheet, wherein at least one of said top sheet and said back sheet comprises an elastic material.~~

4. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said first and second crotch edges comprise a first and second longitudinally extending slit formed therein respectively, wherein said crotch member covers said first and second slits.

5. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:  
a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side  
edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first  
waist edge;

a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side  
edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said  
second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally  
spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges  
comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and  
a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering  
said at least one slit;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1~~ wherein said crotch member comprises opposite sides and at least one fold formed along each of said opposite sides, wherein said at least one fold on said opposite sides are connected to at least one of said front and rear body panels on opposite sides of said slit.

6. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said at least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said at least one slit comprises an elastic material and is expandable between at least a first and second condition, wherein a pair of edges defining said slit are substantially abutted when said at least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said elastic material are in said first condition, and wherein said pair of edges defining said slit are separated when said at

least one of said front and rear body panels comprising said elastic material are in said second condition.

7. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 6 wherein said crotch member is connected to said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said at least one slit when said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said slit is in said second condition.

8. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 6 wherein said crotch member is connected to said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said at least one slit when said at least one of said front and rear body panel comprising said slit is in said first condition.

9. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:  
a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;  
a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and

a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said front body panel has a first length defined between said first waist edge and said first crotch edge, and wherein said rear body panel has a second length defined between said second waist~~

edge and said second crotch edge, and wherein said slit has a third length, wherein said third length is between about 5% and about 75% of at least one of said first and second lengths.

10. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 9 wherein said third length is between about 10% and about 50% of said at least one of said first and second lengths.

11. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 10 wherein said third length is between about 15% and about 30% of said at least one of said first and second lengths.

12. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:  
a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side  
edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first  
waist edge;

a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side  
edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said  
second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally  
spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges  
comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and

a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering  
said at least one slit;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1~~ wherein said crotch member is minimally attached to said front and rear body panels along a longitudinally extending centerline of said crotch member.

13. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:  
a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side  
edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first  
waist edge;  
a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side  
edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said  
second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally  
spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges  
comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein;  
a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering  
said at least one slit; and  
~~The disposable undergarment of claim 1 further comprising~~ at least one  
fastener member connected to at least one of said front and rear body panels and  
releasably engaging the other of said front and rear body panels.

14. (Original) The disposable undergarment of claim 13 wherein said at least  
one fastener member comprises a pair of fastener members connected to said at least  
one of said front and rear body panels along one of said pair of opposite laterally  
spaced first and second side edges.

Claims 15-27 (Cancelled).

28. (Currently Amended) The disposable undergarment of claim 1 whereinsaid  
crotch member comprises first and second ~~longitudinal~~ longitudinally spaced  
terminal edges, wherein said first and second terminal edges are longitudinally spaced  
from said first and second crotch edges respectively.

29. (Currently Amended) A disposable undergarment comprising:

a front body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced first side edges, a first waist edge and a first crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said first waist edge;

a rear body panel comprising a pair of opposite laterally spaced second side edges, a second waist edge and a second crotch edge longitudinally spaced from said second waist edge, wherein said first and second crotch edges are longitudinally spaced from each other, and wherein at least one of said first and second crotch edges comprises at least one longitudinally extending slit formed therein; and

a crotch member connected to said front and rear body panels and covering said at least one slit, wherein said crotch member comprises first and second longitudinally spaced terminal edges, wherein said first and second terminal edges are longitudinally spaced from said first and second crotch edges respectively;

~~The disposable undergarment of claim 28 wherein said crotch member~~  
comprises a top sheet and a back sheet defining said first and second terminal edges, and an retention portion disposed between said top sheet and said back sheet.

30. (Previously Presented) The disposable undergarment of claim 1 wherein said slit is formed through an entire thickness of said at least one of said first and second crotch edges.

31. (Previously Presented) The disposable undergarment of claim 30 wherein said front and rear body panels each comprises at least a first and second layer, wherein said at least one slit is formed through said at least said first and second layers.